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(72) Inventor: **Williams, David Mark**
Hope Valley, Derby S32 5QP (GB)

(74) Representative: **Houghton, David et al**
Hulse & Co,
St. James House, 8th Floor,
Vicar Lane
Sheffield S1 2EX (GB)

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(71) Applicant: **Siddall and Hilton Limited**
Halifax, West Yorkshire HX6 2QE (GB)

(54) **Body support arrangements**

(57) Conventional beds have a spring mattress and a sprung base for the comfort of the user, but on profiling beds, a sprung base cannot be used and, ordinarily, a mattress is laid on lifting and lowering mechanism, with a result that when pivoted or folded, folding or rucking of the surface of the mattress occurs to the discomfort of the user. A first object of the invention is to avoid the above disadvantage, and a second object is to provide a body support arrangement of greater comfort than conventional mattresses and separate bases.

The first objective is met by a body support arrangement comprising at least two sectors connected in such a manner as to permit a relative pivoting of the sectors with respect to each other, each sector being formed by an upper sprung or filled mattress part and lower sprung base part. Preferably, the body support arrangement

comprises three sectors, each sector being hingedly connected to an adjacent sector, to allow each sector to be so angularly positioned to suit a users required body and leg dispositions. At the pivot area between the mattress parts of the sectors, a filling of a resilient and compressible material may be provided between the springs. The second objective is met by a construction comprising an array of springs, extending between upper and lower surfaces of the support arrangement in spaced relationship in the longitudinal and transverse directions, the spaces between at least some of the springs being filled with resilient and compressible material. The filling preferably extends over the full length and width of the arrangement, and further, preferably, is in upper and lower layers with through holes into which extend the upper and lower ends of the springs respectively.

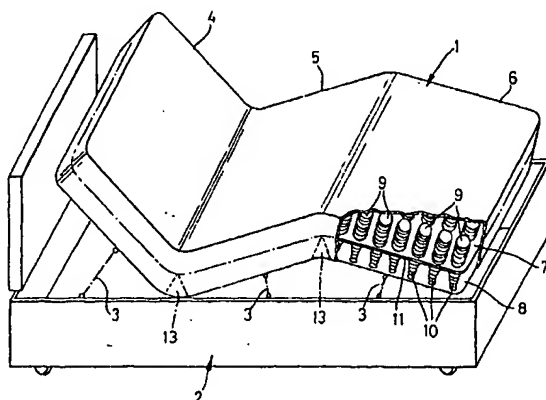


Fig.1

Description

[0001] This invention relates to body support arrangements, particularly for beds.

[0002] Ordinarily, beds have a body support arrangement formed by a base overlaid by a mattress, and there has evolved a considerable variety of spring or filled mattresses, the spring arrangements or the fillings such as foam rubber being such as to offer a wide variety of firm to soft mattresses to suit a potential user.

[0003] Whilst mattresses can be laid on a firm, unyielding base, it has long been recognised that a greater degree of comfort can be provided to the user if the base itself is sprung, by a spring arrangement that has its own characteristics to add to or complement the spring or filled mattress.

[0004] Conventional beds for normal use are formed by a sprung base with a horizontal surface on which the mattress is laid. However, when it comes to beds for users with a need or a preference to use a bed other than flat, sections of the bed are frequently required to be raised or lowered, such as, for example, to raise the upper body to an approximate sitting position, or to raise or bend the legs.

[0005] Conventional beds are not conducive to this. The presence of a spring base impedes the correct location of lifting and lowering mechanism for the mattress, and if such mechanism is applied solely to the mattress, an attempt to lift a section of it would simply result in the mattress bending or folding of normal mattresses would cause rucking on its surface and be unseable.

[0006] To combat this, the common practise is to dispense with a sprung base and to lie the mattress on a rigid platform, sections of which can be lifted and lowered to cause sections of mattress to assume a required disposition to suit the needs or the requirements of a user, but at the expense of detracting from the total comfort and support available in conventional beds.

[0007] The object of the invention is to provide a body support arrangement that avoids the disadvantages mentioned above.

[0008] According to one aspect of the present invention, a body support arrangement comprises at least two sectors connected in such a manner as to permit a relative pivoting of the sectors with respect to each other, each sector being formed by an upper sprung or filled mattress part and lower sprung base part. Preferably, the body support arrangement comprises three sectors, each sector being hingedly connected to an adjacent sector, to allow each sector to be so angularly positioned to suit a users required body and leg dispositions.

[0009] The spring arrangement or filling of the mattress part, and the spring arrangement of the base part can follow existing teachings, to give each sector characteristics identical to those of a conventional bed, and support for the springs of a spring mattress part can be by way of a wire mesh or metal strip lattice in the plane

intersecting the mattress and base parts.

[0010] The hinge connection between adjacent sectors may be in the plane of the upper surface of the mattress part or the lower surface of the base part, but, for the greater comfort of the user, the hinge is preferably positioned in the plane of the intersection of the mattress and base parts.

[0011] To facilitate the lifting and lowering of the adjacent sectors of the body support arrangement, each base section may be formed with a solid base and solid or covered sides, and to enable the pivoting of one sector in relation to an adjacent sector, abutting faces of the bases of adjacent sectors are angled to provide a V-shaped gap below the pivot.

[0012] A body support arrangement as is discussed above can be positioned on a suitable support structure, on which or within which is located appropriate mechanism to lift and lower each sector as required to suit a user. Thus, mechanical linkages, screw drives, motor drives, air drives or hydraulic mechanisms can all be employed.

[0013] To ensure that a mattress does not distort to the discomfort of a user, at the location of the pivot and when one sector is pivoted to a raised position, a different spring means can be provided in a sprung mattress in the vicinity of the hinge, better able to deflect and accommodate an angular disposition of adjacent mattress sectors. Equally, a foam rubber filling can be used in an otherwise conventionally sprung mattress part in the vicinity of the pivot. With such as a foam rubber filled mattress part, each sector could have a sector of foam filling of different characteristics to the remainder of the foam filling, in the vicinity of the pivot to accommodate the setting of adjacent sectors in a required angular relationship, without distorting the surface of the mattress part.

[0014] In a preferred form of construction, the adjacent mattress sectors effectively form a conventional and continuous mattress.

[0015] According to a second aspect of the present invention, a body support arrangement comprises an array of springs, extending between upper and lower surfaces of the support arrangement in spaced relationship in the longitudinal and transverse directions, the spaces between at least some of the springs being filled with resilient and compressible material. By matching the ratings of the springs to the compressibility of the resilient and compressible materials, a body support arrangement of any required firmness or softness to suit a user, can be provided.

[0016] Preferably, the resilient and compressible material is so structured as to have different degrees of resilience and compressibility towards the upper and the lower surfaces of the support means to simulate upper and lower mattress and base parts, which can be arranged by having a graduated degree of resilience and compressibility, or desirably by providing upper and lower layers of resilient and compressible material, with each layer having a required degree of resilience and

compressibility.

[0017] Where the requirement is for a conventional and continuous mattress, a combination of spaced springs and resilient and compressible filling can extend over the full width and length of a body support arrangement, and the softness/firmness of it can be constant over its full width and length. However, by selection of different springs and different resilient and compressible materials, and strategically positioning them across the width and over the length of the body support, it can be tailored to suit the particular requirements of the user, by creating zones of required softness and firmness.

[0018] When used in conjunction with a suitable profiling support structure, on or within which is located appropriate mechanisms to lift and lower sectors of the support structure, a body support arrangement in accordance with the second embodiment, by having spaced springs and a resilient and compressible material, at least across the width of the arrangement at the position where one section is intended to pivot or bend in relation to an adjacent section, a smooth transition is provided between adjacent sectors set at different angular inclinations, free from any folding or rucking of the upper surface of the arrangement, to the considerable benefit of the user.

[0019] Whilst spaced springs and fillings of resilient and compressible material can be provided over the full width and length of a body support arrangement intended for use with a profiling support structure, individual sectors of a body support arrangement in accordance with the first embodiment of the invention, can each be produced with spaced springs and a filling of resilient and compressible material.

[0020] Here again, a hinge between adjacent sectors may be in the plane of the upper surface of the mattress part or the lower surface of the base part, but, for the greater comfort of the user, the hinge is preferably positioned in the plane of the intersection of the mattress and base parts.

[0021] For ease of manufacture, the springs for the second embodiment of the invention may be relatively conventional pocketed springs, but with alternate springs removed in each longitudinal row, and with retained springs in one longitudinal row offset in relation to retained springs in the immediately adjacent row. This generates a circumstance where the array of springs generates a triangular distribution with adequate space between adjacent springs to allow for spring movement without there being contact between adjacent springs.

[0022] With a body support arrangement of the first and second embodiments, it has the capability of serving as a conventional mattress and sprung base arrangement and, additionally, as a mattress for use on an adjustable bed with no loss of those desirable characteristics of conventional beds.

[0023] Several embodiments of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is a schematic part sectional perspective view of one embodiment of the invention;

Figures 2 to 6 are schematic side elevations of the body support arrangement of Figure 1 in various of its possible orientations;

Figure 7 is a plan view of a spring array of a second embodiment of the invention;

Figure 8 is a perspective view of the inner structure of the second embodiment of the invention;

Figure 9 is a schematic sectional elevation of one form of body support arrangement of Figure 7;

Figure 10 is a schematic sectional side elevation of a second form of body support arrangement of Figure 7;

Figure 11 is a plan view of resilient and compressible slit sheet prior to its expansion;

Figures 12 and 13 each illustrate embodiments of a pivot able to be used with the body support arrangement of Figure 7.

[0024] In Figures 1 to 6, a body support arrangement 1 is in the form of a mattress for a bed 2, and as is particularly shown, the bed is a profiling bed, with mechanisms indicated at 3 whereby sectors 4, 5 and 6 of the body support arrangement can be set at required angular inclinations. As is indicated by Figure 2, the body support arrangement can be used flat and relatively conventionally, with the sectors 4, 5 and 6 horizontally aligned, and as is indicated in Figures 3 to 6, each of the sections 4, 5 and 6 can be set at required angular dispositions and heights to suit the requirements or needs of a particular user.

[0025] To enable the body support arrangement 1 to have the feel and comfort level of a conventional spring mattress and spring base, it is formed in each sector 4, 5, 6, with an upper part 7 and a lower part 8.

[0026] In the upper part 7, there is provided an array of springs 9 of a type and a rating that allow them to serve the purpose of comfort springs, and in the lower part 8, there is provided an array of different and stiffer springs 10, to serve the purpose of support springs. As is indicated in Figure 1, a lattice or wire mesh 11 is provided whereby to support the springs 10 above the springs 9.

[0027] Desirably, and as is indicated in Figures 2 to 6, a hinged connection 12 between the sectors 4, 5, 6 is at the mid-plane of the body support arrangement, and to prevent contact between adjacent springs 10 in the lower part 8, a V-shaped gap 13 is created below the pivot.

[0028] In Figures 7 to 10 is illustrated a second embodiment of body support arrangement 14. Here, relatively conventional, so-called pocketed springs 15 are provided, of a height to extend between the upper and lower surfaces of the body support arrangement. As is shown in Figure 7 the pocketed springs are in lengthwise rows 16, but unlike conventional pocketed springs, alternate springs are removed to leave gaps 17, and in

adjacent lengthwise rows, the springs and gaps are offset, such as to have a spring 15 of one row laterally aligned with a gap 17 in the adjacent row. As is shown by Figure 8, complete longitudinal and lateral rows of pocketed springs can be provided at the lateral and lengthwise sides, to provide edge strength.

[0029] As is illustrated in Figure 9, the fabric 18 of the pocketed springs, in the gap 17 where a spring has been removed is cut at its upper and lower edges to leave a tie 19 between adjacent springs, and the gap 17 above and below the tie are filled with a resilient and compressible material 20, 21 such as a foam rubber. For ease of manufacture and assembly, the upper and lower fillers may be formed as a single sheet 22 of a requisite length and width, and slit as is indicated at 23 in Figure 10. Thus, when the slit material is stretched, through passageways are created of a size to accommodate the upper or the lower end of a pocketed spring.

[0030] The selection of the particular grade of resilient and compressible material for the upper layer 20 is such as to provide, in combination with the springs, a comfort layer, and the selection for the lower layer 21 is such that it combines with the springs to provide a support layer, and when the combination of upper and lower parts of the body support arrangement allow it to serve as a conventional mattresses and base, but with the provision of a greater degree of comfort for the user, that can be achieved with conventional spring or filled mattresses and bases.

[0031] A still further advantage of this embodiment of the invention is that the upper layer 20 in particular and possibly the lower layer 21 need not be of one consistency over the width and length of the bed, and the springs need not be of a single rating. Thus, areas of the bed can be determined, and different grades of e.g. foam rubber used selectively, and springs of different ratings used selectively over the area of the body support arrangement, to provide levels of softness and firmness to suit a users particular requirements.

[0032] The construction of the body support arrangement of Figures 7 to 11, by virtue of the provision of gaps between springs and e.g. foam rubber fillings, allows it to be used flat and as a conventional bed. However, a body support arrangement in accordance with the second embodiment can be laid on the lifting and lowering mechanisms of a profiling bed, to cause sectors 22, 23 and 24 of the support arrangement to be set at required angular dispositions to adjacent sectors, adjacent sectors effectively pivoting about a motional pivot centrally of the construction, with a smooth curved transition free from folding and rucking, as is indicated schematically in Figure 11.

[0033] As is illustrated schematically in Figure 11, the body support arrangement of the second embodiment can have a defined pivot area by removing all springs in a transverse line across the support arrangement, and to have a pivot 25 at the junctions of support plates 26 to which drive mechanisms 27 are attached. These

transverse lines across the width serve as transitional zones and can be filled with resilient and compressible material as is indicated at 28. Here again, the arrangement can be used flat and conventionally, or as a profiling bed, as may be required.

[0034] However, and to have the pivot located mid-plane of the body support arrangement as is desirable, attachment means can be provided between adjacent springs. Thus, as is illustrated in Figure 12, a member 29 can extend between and be pivotally attached between adjacent springs, to cause adjacent springs to pivot with respect to each other at their centre plane. Alternatively, as is shown in Figure 13, generally U-shaped spring clips 30 can be provided mounted on opposite sides of a support 31, that without load will hold adjacent springs in a parallel disposition, but will allow one spring to pivot with respect to the adjacent spring about the centre support.

Claims

1. A body support arrangement **characterised by** at least two sectors (4, 5, 6) connected in such a manner as to permit a relative pivoting of the sectors with respect to each other, each sector being formed by an upper spring or filled mattress part (7) and lower sprung base part (8).
2. A body support arrangement as in Claim 1, **characterised in that** three sectors (4, 5, 6) are provided, each being hingedly connected to an adjacent sector, to allow each sector (4, 5, 6) to be so angularly positioned to suit a users required leg and body positions.
3. A body support arrangement as in Claim 1 or Claim 2, **characterised in that** the spring arrangement (9) or filling of the mattress part (7) and the spring arrangement of the base part (10) are such as to provide conventional characteristics, and the spring arrangement or filling of the mattress part is supported on a wire mesh or strip lattice (11) in the plane intersecting the mattress and base parts.
4. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 1 to 3, **characterised in that** the hinged connection (12) between adjacent sectors may be in the plane of the upper or lower surfaces of the mattress part or the base part respectively.
5. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 1 to 3, **characterised in that** the hinged connection (12) in the plane of the intersection of the mattress (7) and base (8) parts of the sectors.
6. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 1 to 5, **characterised in that** to facilitate the lifting

and lowering of the sectors, each base sector (8) is formed with a solid base (26) and solid or covered sides.

7. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 1 to 6, **characterised in that** abutting faces of the base sectors are angled to provide a V-shaped gap (13) at the pivot (12). 5
8. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 1 to 7, **characterised in that**, at the location of the pivot, a different spring means is provided to accommodate the different angular dispositions of adjacent sectors (4, 5, 6), and avoid folding or rucking of the surface of the mattress part above the pivot. 10
9. A body support arrangement as in Claim 8, **characterised in that** a foam rubber packing (28) is provided between relatively conventional coil springs, at the location of the pivot. 15
10. A body support arrangement, **characterised by** an array of springs (15) extending between upper and lower surfaces of the support arrangement, in spaced relationship in the longitudinal and transverse directions, the spaces between at least some of the springs being filled with resilient and compressible material (20, 21). 20
11. A body support arrangement as in Claim 10, **characterised in that** the filling (20, 21) is at the intersection between adjacent sectors of the body support arrangement. 25
12. A body support arrangement as in Claim 10, **characterised in that** the filling (20, 21) is between the springs (15) over the length and width of the body support arrangement. 30
13. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 10 to 12, **characterised in that** the ratings of the springs and the firmness of the filling (20, 21) is matched to generate a required softness or firmness to suit a user. 35
14. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 10 to 13, **characterised in that** the filling (20, 21) is so structured as to have different degrees of resilience and compressibility towards the upper and lower surfaces of the arrangement. 40
15. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 10 to 13, **characterised in that** upper and lower layers (20, 21) of resilient and compressible material are provided, each layer having a required degree of resilience and compressibility. 45
16. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 12

to 14, **characterised in that**, spring (15) ratings and resilience and compressibility of the filling (20, 21) can be different in different zones across the length and width of the arrangement.

17. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 10 to 17, **characterised in that** the springs (15) are relatively conventional pocket springs, with alternate springs removed.
18. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 10 to 17, wherein the resilient and compressible material (20, 21) is foam rubber, and fabric (18) between the retained springs (15) cut to leave a centrally disposed tie (19).
19. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 15 to 18, **characterised in that** each layer (20, 21) of resilient and compressible material is formed as a pad (22) of required initial width and length, with spaced slits (23), and whereby the pad can be pulled to a required width to cause the slits to open to become through holes into which the ends of the springs can be inserted.
20. A body support arrangement as in any of Claims 10 to 19, **characterised in that** to create a pivot at the intersection between the upper mattress part and lower base part of the arrangement, clip means (29, 31) can be provided at the intersection between adjacent sectors of the arrangement.

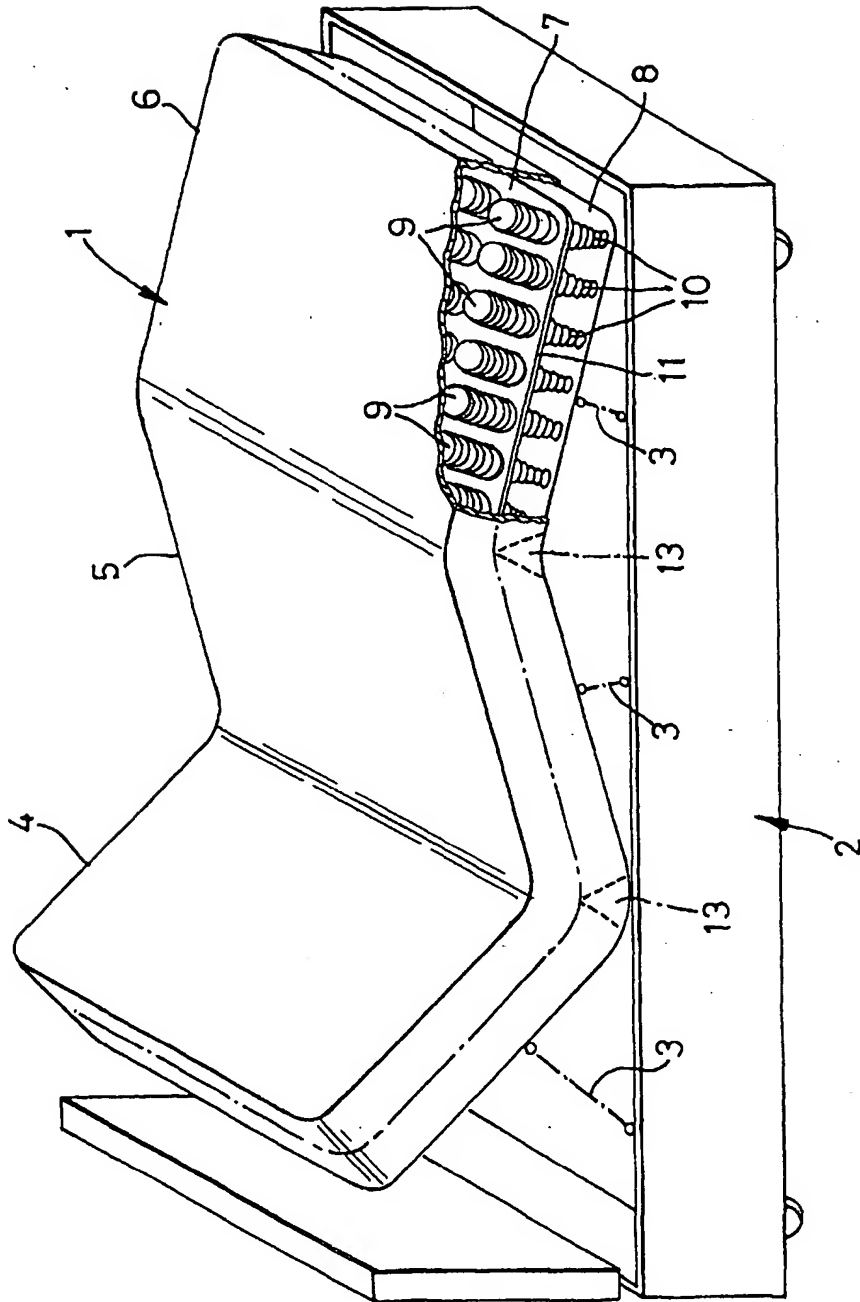
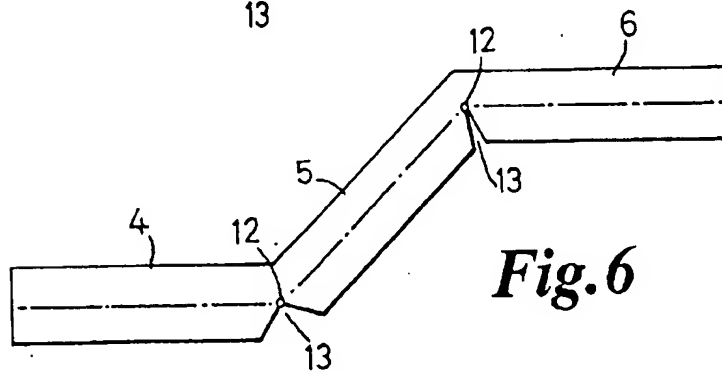
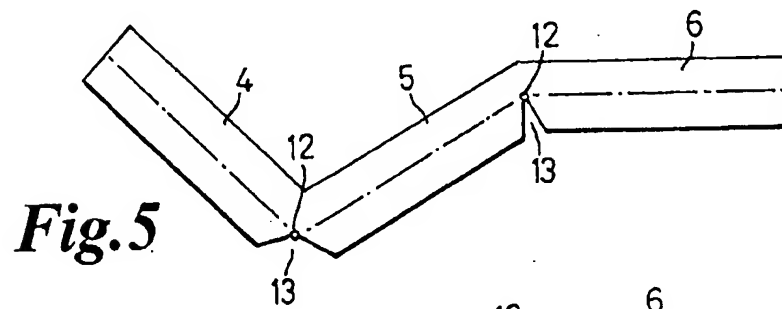
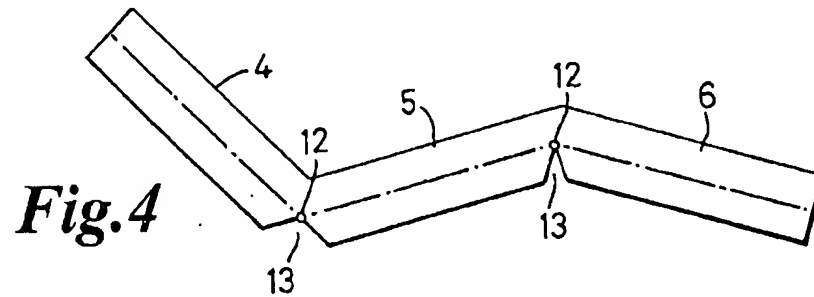
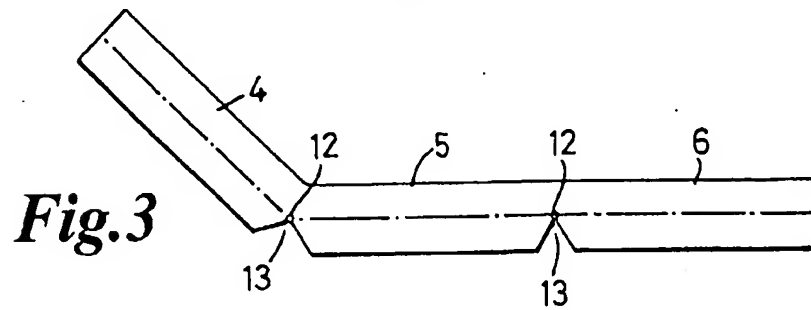
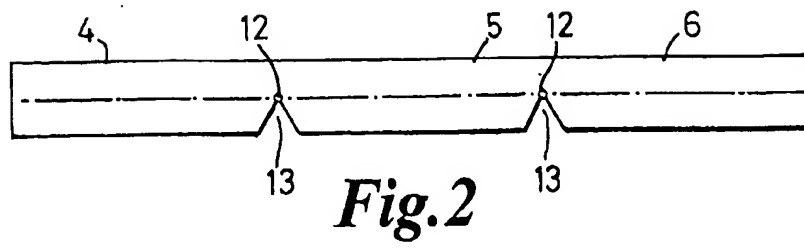
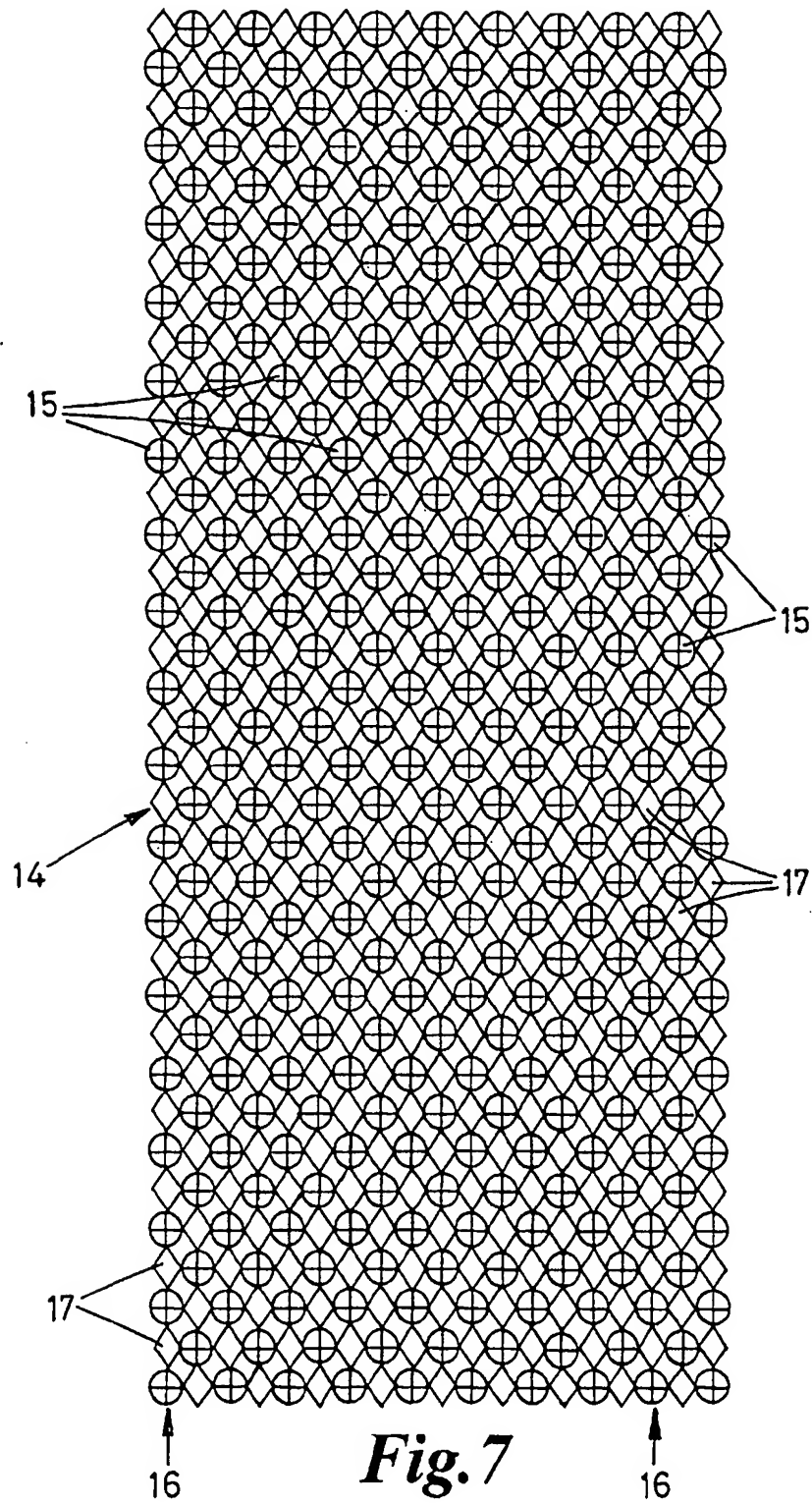


Fig. 1





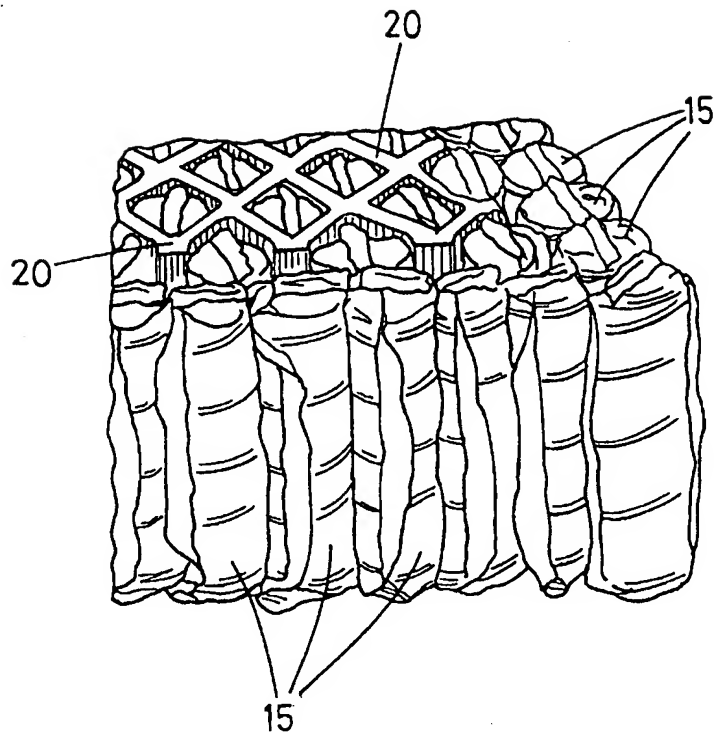


Fig.8

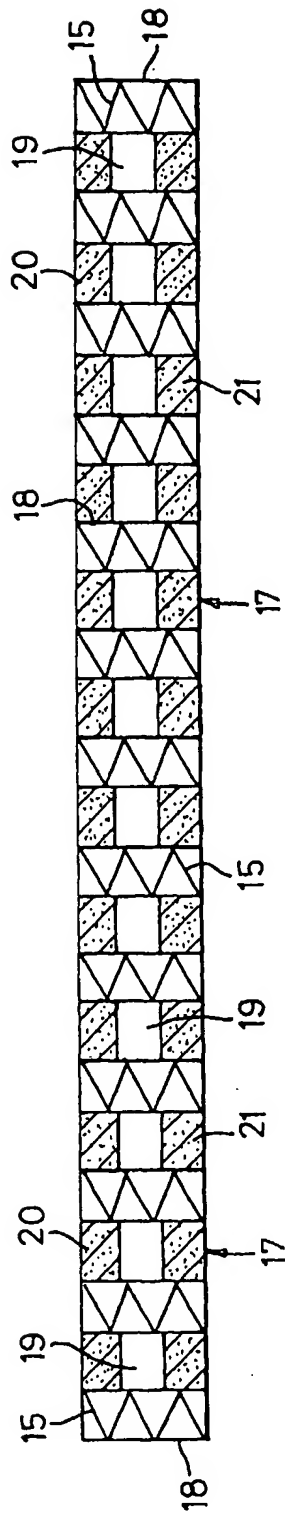


Fig. 9

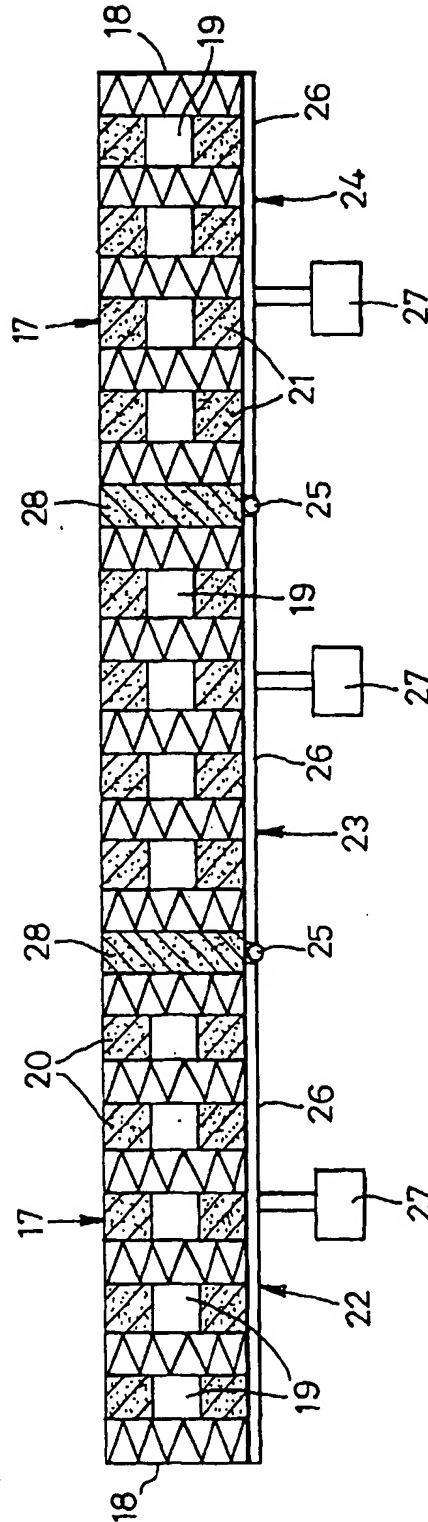


Fig. 10

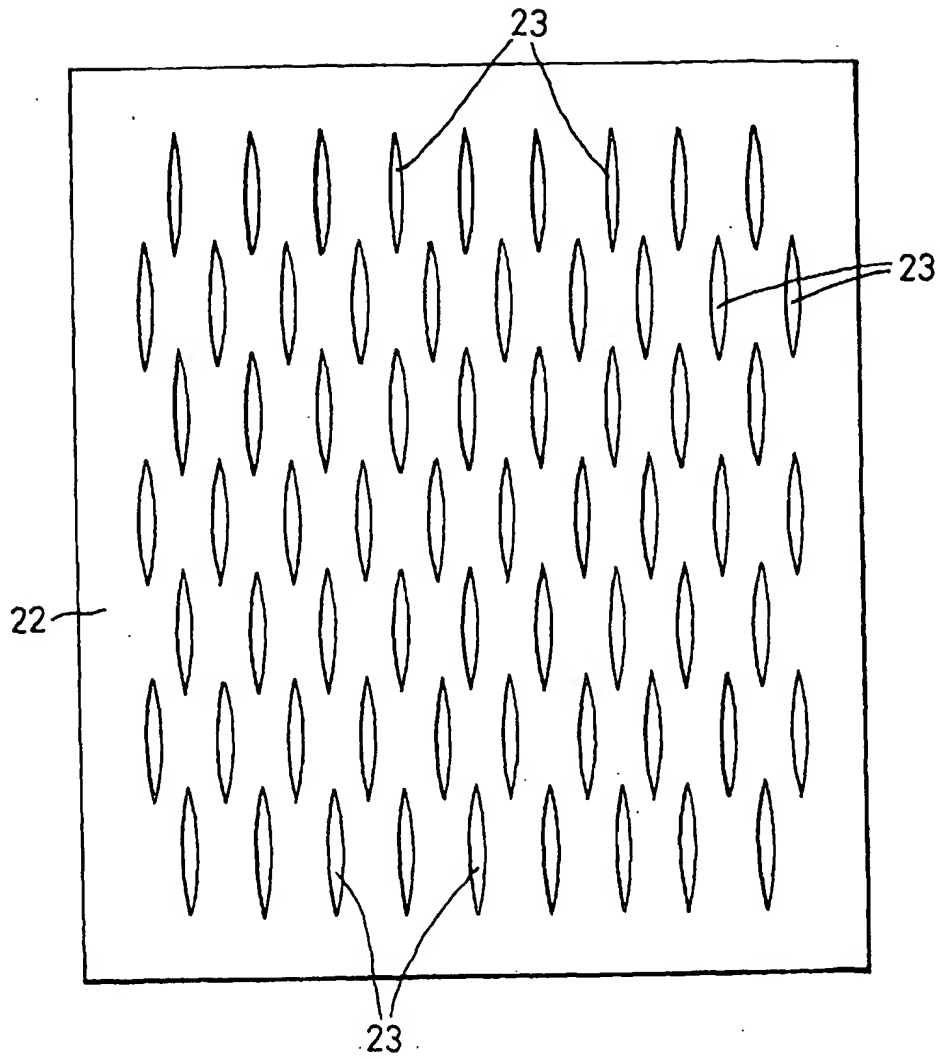


Fig.11

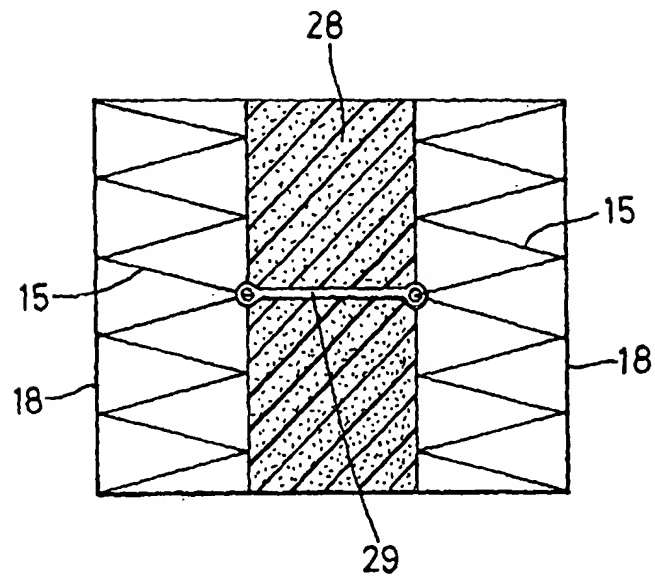


Fig. 12

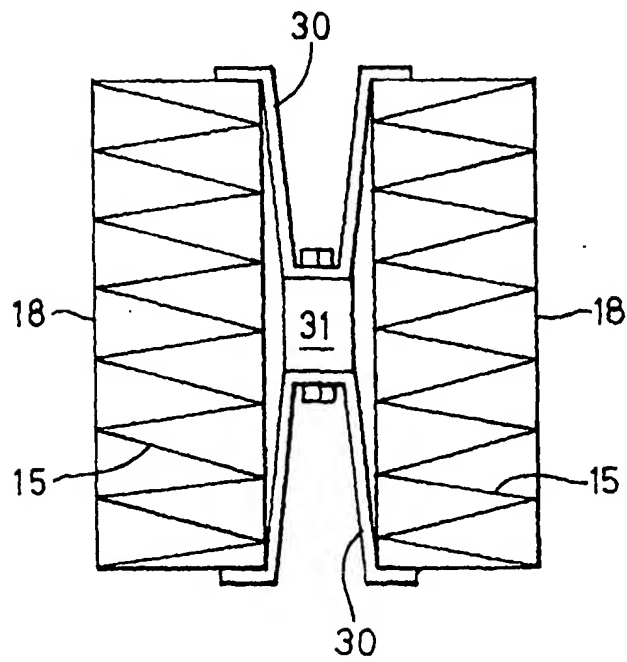


Fig. 13



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 31 January 2002	Examiner Amghar, N
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document</p> <p>T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D: document cited in the application L: document cited for other reasons & member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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